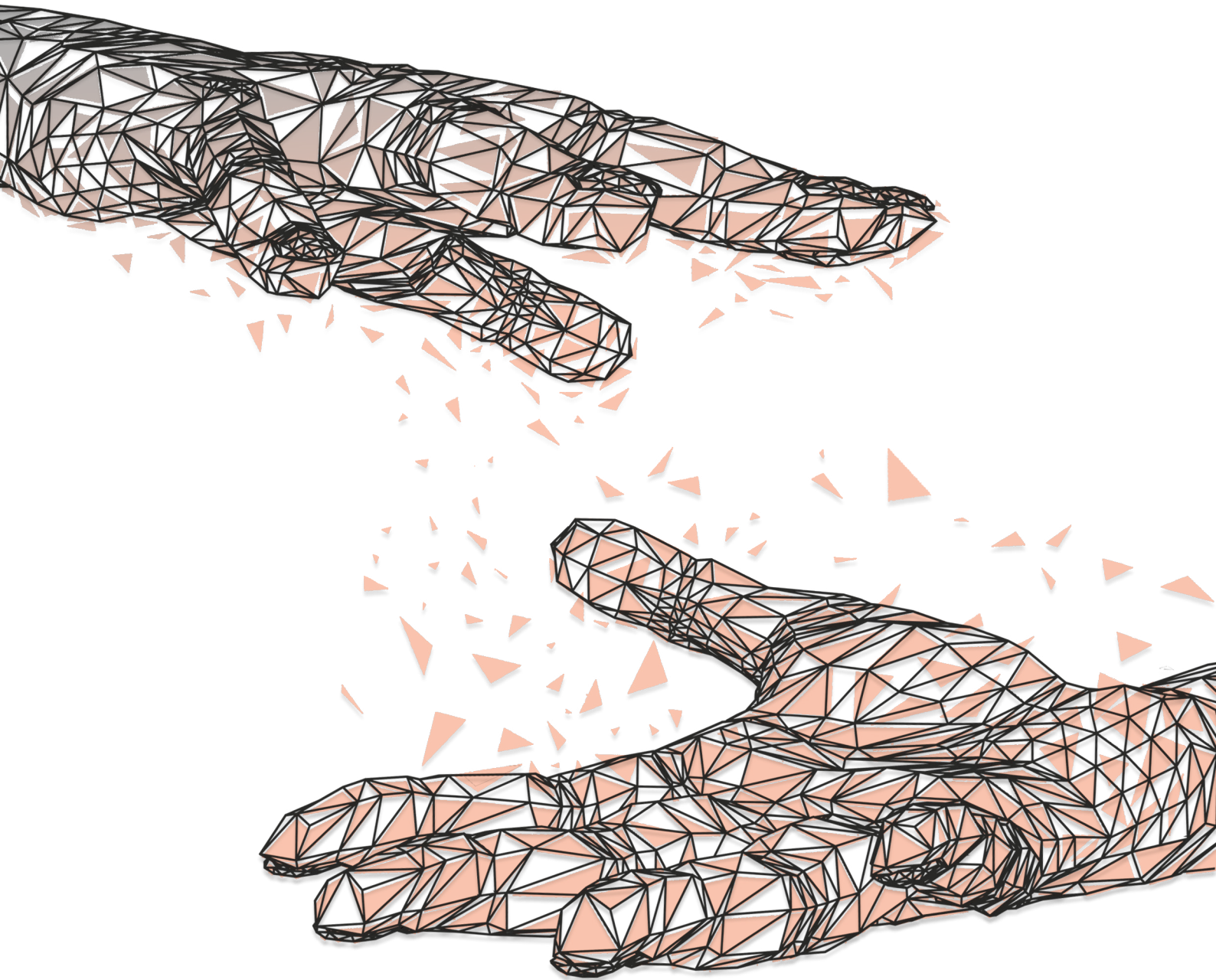


**COUNSELLING PRACTITIONER
BEGINNER TO ADVANCED**



ONTOLOGY
**THE SOURCE OF
HUMAN IDENTITY**

ONTOLOGY - THE SOURCE OF HUMAN IDENTITY

Ontology is important for all counsellors to understand and prescribe to because ontology is the study of being real, and the art of being real is known as congruence (a key trait in any successful counsellor). Congruence not only demonstrates a person's inner harmony, but also encompasses their willingness to be authentic and genuine.

Everyone has asked themselves the main ontological questions in life:

- Who am I?
- What is the purpose of life?
- Why are we here?
- What does life mean?
- How can I live a more meaningful life?

We tend to answer these questions by employing the same internal sources used to formulate our identities: our thoughts, feelings, beliefs and opinions. However, when it comes to defining who we are and establishing our identity, we can do so in either a positive or negative way which can prove detrimental. If we believe we are stupid, feel we're fat, or think we're bad vehemently enough, it becomes ingrained in our belief system as "truth". However, the opinions we have of ourselves, and what we feel, believe, and think are all irrelevant in light of truth.

We cannot be congruent in life if we are acting and behaving out of accordance with who we think, feel, or believe we are, but the journey of knowing who we are is lifelong, and it's not something any counsellor can answer for a client. Whilst labels can help someone assign themselves an identity, the strongest identity one can have of themselves is visionary, which again can either be negative or positive.

If our visions of our future are negative, our lives will be filled with dread, stress, anxiety and upset. However, if our visions of the future are meaningful, our lives will be filled with excitement, opportunity and room to grow. These are known as life giving and life taking visions.

We all need a unique reference point in life, to focus our vision for our futures. Until we know who we are, we'll spend our lives clutching at straws, trying everything we can to feel the degree of contentment and peace we're desperate to experience. We all need to formulate a vision of our future self for whom we can ultimately take responsibility for. Without it, we'll become disempowered victims of what we will see as a tragic and bad world, rather than empowered individuals who are playing their part in making this world a better place.

HOW HAVE YOU COME TO DEFINE YOURSELF?

Everyone, at some point in life, must make a decision on who they are willing to be. Every day we have the opportunity to form opinions, and make decisions about what we believe about ourselves, and how we feel and think. Our authentic identity stems from the decisions and choices that we make on a day to day basis, therefore meaning that we are always just one decision away from becoming more like the person we are willing to become.



ONTOLOGY - THE SOURCE OF HUMAN IDENTITY

Every day we are given the opportunity to review our lives, evaluate the truths we perceive, and ask ourselves if we're being true to who we are. Who you are willing to become in life is your responsibility, and you have the freedom and power in life to say to yourself: I don't like myself; who would I like to be instead?

To form a solid identity, we must commit to the process of looking within. We can't turn to books, blogs or other people to find out who we truly are. We must constantly ask ourselves: am I content with who I'm being? Can I become more? We are always just one decision away from fulfilling the future vision we have of ourselves; all you need is to arm yourself with life-giving visions.

Getting to the core of who you are is like getting to the heart of an apple. The apple will never be the best and highest expression of itself (in its current form) because there's a tree inside of each apple in the shape of a seed. This seed needs to be released, and it needs to be transformed!

Exercise:

Over the next few pages you will have the opportunity to explore yourself to the core. Each exercise will push you not only to confront your instinctive thoughts, feelings, beliefs and opinions about yourself, but challenge you to identify and remove your life taking visions and adopt and strengthen new and existing life-giving visions.



ONTOLOGY - THE SOURCE OF HUMAN IDENTITY

THOUGHTS

If we don't have control over the thoughts that come into our minds, where do our thoughts originate from? No one really knows the answer, but our thoughts will always influence what we do with our lives.

- On and around the circle, write down everything you do in life. Not behaviours, but things you do in life. This can include jobs, hobbies, volunteer work, social events, exercise, smoking, drinking, computer game playing etc.
- There will be a mix of positive and negative things listed in the circle which will constitute towards either a life-giving vision, or life-taking vision.
- When you've written as much as you can, highlight the life-giving visions and cross out the life-taking visions.
Now add to the circle more life-giving visions which encompass who you are willing to become. Add to the circle anything you would like to do in life, or see yourself doing in life.

WHAT YOU DO



ONTOLOGY - THE SOURCE OF HUMAN IDENTITY

FEELINGS

Many people define themselves by how they feel; but feelings are transient and some feelings are more beneficial than others, and our focus on detrimental emotions can rob our life of productivity.

- In and around the circle below, write down everything you're feeling, from emotions to ways you're feeling about certain aspects in life.
- It's important to identify with emotions that feel comfortable and safe to you. This may sound strange, but many times people with depression relapse into depressed thoughts and feelings because it's comfortable and familiar to them. Are there any to you that you find a comfort zone which you keep returning to?
- There will be a mix positive and negative things listed in the circle which will constitute towards either a life-giving vision, or life-taking vision.
- When you've written as much as you can, highlight the life-giving visions and cross out the life-taking visions. Which feelings can you change by just changing one or more aspects of your life?
- Now add to the circle more life-giving visions which encompass who you are willing to become. How would you like to feel about things in the future?



HOW YOU FEEL



ONTOLOGY - THE SOURCE OF HUMAN IDENTITY

BELIEFS

People act out of accordance with who they believe they are. Some people have taken in so much negative, overly critical feedback that they grow up believing they're fundamentally a bad person.

- In and around the circle below, write down all the beliefs you have about yourself, who you are and who you think you'll be.
- There will be a mix of life-giving visions, and life-taking visions.
- There will be a mix positive and negative things listed in the circle which will constitute towards either a life-giving vision, or life-taking vision.
- When you've written as much as you can, highlight the life-giving visions and cross out the life-taking visions. When looking at each belief system, ask yourself where (or who) these beliefs came from. What evidence do you have that supports these beliefs?
- Now add to the circle more life-giving visions which encompass who you are willing to become. Who would you like to become, and who do you think you're capable of becoming?

HOW YOU BEHAVE



ONTOLOGY - THE SOURCE OF HUMAN IDENTITY

OPINIONS

Everyone has opinions about themselves which, you may find, don't match with your beliefs. You may believe yourself to be a bad person, you may believe yourself to be a failure: but what's your opinion about yourself? Are these beliefs your opinions?

- In and around the circle below, write down all the opinions you have about yourself: your lifestyle, your work, your habits, your personality, etc.
- There will be a mix positive and negative things listed in the circle which will constitute towards either a life-giving vision, or life-taking vision.
- When you've written as much as you can, highlight the life-giving visions and cross out the life-taking visions.
- Now add to the circle more life-giving visions which encompass who you are willing to become. What opinions would you like to have of yourself?



WHO YOU ARE

